

Message Text

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ACTION EA-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 SP-02 NSC-05 INR-05
L-01 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00 PA-01 IO-06 ACDA-10
/056 W

-----032489 161212Z /10

R 151040Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9640
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 0702

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP, MARR, TH, SN
SUBJECT: THAI PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO SINGAPORE : SECURITY AND
DEFENSE MATTERS

REF: SINGAPORE 0665

1. DURING LUNCHEON DISCUSSION WITH THAI AMBASSADOR JETN
SUCHARITKUL ON FEBRUARY 13 (REFTEL) HE MENTIONED THAT PRIME
MINISTER KRIANGSAK WAS BRINGING A VERY HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION WITH
HIM ON HIS VISIT TO SINGAPORE (THIS VISIT COMMENCES EITHER FEB-
RUARY 25 OR 26 -- DEFINITE DATE IS STILL BEING WORKED OUT --
AND WILL CONTINUE FOR THREE OR FOUR DAYS.) JETN STATED THERE
WILL BE EITHER 6 OR 7 CABINET MINISTERS ACCOMPANYING PM KRIANGSAK.
GENERAL PREM, DEPUTY MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR, IS TO BE
MEMBER OF DELEGATION, AS IS GENERAL YOT, DEPUTY COMMANDER-IN-
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CHIEF OF THE THAI ARMY.

2. CONCERNING GENERALS YOT AND PREM, JETN STATED QUITE FRANKLY
THAT THEIR PRESENCE WAS TO FACILITATE PM KRIANGSAK'S DISCUSSIONS
OF SECURITY MATTERS WITH SINGAPOREANS, AND ALSO SUBJECT OF
DEFENSE PRODUCTION. REGARDING DEFENSE PRODUCTION, HE STATED ASEAN
COUNTRIES WERE HOPING THAT WITHIN 10 YEARS THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO

STANDARDIZE MUCH OF THEIR WEAPONRY SO THAT IF ONE COUNTRY NEEDED SPARES, OTHERS MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP OUT ON AN EMERGENCY BASIS WITHOUT RECOURSE TO ORIGINAL MANUFACTURER. HE NOTED THAT SINGAPORE ALREADY HAS DEFENSE INDUSTRIES, AS WELL AS REPRESENTATIVE FOR BELL HELICOPTERS, HELI-ORIENT. HE INDICATED THAT ASEAN COUNTRIES HAVE FAIRLY WELL DECIDED UPON BELL AS MANUFACTURER OF HELICOPTER TO BE PUT INTO COMMON USE.

3. JETN REMARKED THAT DELEGATION PM KRIANGSAK IS BRINGING TO SINGAPORE WILL NOT BE THE SAME AS GROUP GOING TO INDONESIA, WHICH WILL BE SOMEWHAT SMALLER AND WILL NOT INCLUDE GENERALS YOT AND PREM. HE ADDED THAT THE ORIGINAL INTENTION WAS TO HAVE PM KRIANGSAK AND OTHERS PROCEED TO PHILIPPINES FROM INDONESIA, BUT PHILIPPINES WERE "NOT YET READY" SO ENTIRE GROUP WILL RETURN DIRECTLY TO BANGKOK FROM JAKARTA BEFORE MAKING VISIT TO SINGAPORE.

4. JETN THEN ASKED ME IF THERE WAS ANY WAY FOR THAILAND TO OBTAIN LOW-INTEREST LOANS FROM U.S. GOVERNMENT FOR PURCHASE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT, NOTING THAT HE HAD BEEN SPENDING A LARGE AMOUNT OF TIME LATELY ARRANGING FOR COMMERCIAL LOANS FROM AMERICAN BANKS SITUATED IN SINGAPORE TO PROVIDE FUNDS FOR THIS PURPOSE. HE COMPLAINED THAT COMMERCIAL LOANS CARRIED COMPARATIVELY HIGH INTEREST RATES, AND THAT HE HAD FOUND HIMSELF ENGAGED IN TEDIOUS NEGOTIATIONS WITH AMERICAN BANKERS TO ARRANGE FOR MOST FAVORABLE TERMS. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD BEEN DESIGNATED TO SIGN THESE LOANS ON BEHALF OF HIS GOVERNMENT. I SAID I WAS NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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TOO FAMILIAR WITH TERMS OF FMS CREDIT SALES SINCE SINGAPORE'S FMS PURCHASES WERE ALL MADE IN CASH, BUT I WOULD TRY TO PROVIDE THE INFORMATION HE HAD REQUESTED.

5. COMMENT AND ACTION REQUESTED: THIS IS FIRST INDICATION I HAVE RECEIVED THAT PLANS FOR ASEAN COOPERATION IN DEFENSE MATTERS ARE SO FAR ADVANCED. A CHECK-UP ON HELI-ORIENT (WHICH IS A BRANCH OF THE UK-BASED ANGLO-THAI CORPORATION) INDICATES THAT IT IS IN FACT ACTING AS BELL HELICOPTER AGENT FOR SINGAPORE, INDONESIA, MALAYSIA AND THAILAND. ON PRODUCTION SIDE, SINGAPORE MANUFACTURES 5.56 AND 7.62 MM AMMUNITION WHICH MIGHT BE OF USE TO ITS ASEAN PARTNERS. ON SCORE OF AMBASSADOR JETN'S REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON FMS CREDIT, I BELIEVE THIS IS MATTER BEST ADDRESSED BY EMBASSY BANGKOK, ALTHOUGH I WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION WHICH DEPARTMENT CAN FURNISH.
HOLDRIDGE

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, AGREEMENTS, SECURITY, VISITS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SINGAP00702
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780071-0720
Format: TEL
From: SINGAPORE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780252/aaaabrsx.tel
Line Count: 110
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 36def2d8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 78 SINGAPORE 665
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3585927
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THAI PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO SINGAPORE : SECURITY AND DEFENSE MATTERS
TAGS: OVIP, MARR, TH, SN, (KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/36def2d8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014